V.A.5.N.e.1. SPARTINA PATENS – (SCIRPUS PUNGENS) HERBACEOUS ALLIANCE

Saltmeadow Cordgrass – (Threesquare) Herbaceous Alliance

Physiognomic Class	Herbaceous Vegetation (V.)
Physiognomic Subclass	Perennial graminoid vegetation (grassland) (V.A.)
Physiognomic Group	Temperate or sub-polar grassland (V.A.5.)
Physiognomic Subgroup	Natural/Semi-natural (V.A.5.N.)
Formation	Short sod temperate or subpolar grassland (V.A.5.N.e.)

Alliance **SALTMEADOW CORDGRASS – (THREESQUARE) HERBACEOUS ALLIANCE (V.A.5.N.e.1)**

Spartina patens - Schoenoplectus pungens - Solidago sempervirens Herbaceous Vegetation

Saltmeadow Cordgrass - Threesquare - Seaside Goldenrod Herbaceous Vegetation

Overwash Dune Grassland

CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENCE LEVEL: 2

USFS WETLAND SYSTEM: N/A

RANGE:

Fire Island National Seashore

This association occurs in small patches in overwash areas of the Wilderness Area of Fire Island.

Globally

This community is an upland dune grassland of mid-Atlantic barrier islands. It is best developed on barrier islands of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina; it extends sporadically farther north to Massachusetts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

Fire Island National Seashore

This association occurs behind primary dunes in areas that have been affected by overwash. The substrate is a shallow layer of loamy sand over sand.

Globally

This community is an upland dune grassland of mid-Atlantic barrier islands. The plants of this community are influenced by water-deposited sand caused by storm surges. They differ ecologically from dune grasslands dominated by *Ammophila breviligulata* or *Uniola paniculata*, which are primarily impacted by wind-deposited sand. Storm overwash is a prevalent natural disturbance to this community.

MOST ABUNDANT SPECIES:

Fire Island National Seashore

Stratum	Species
Herbaceous	*Spartina patens* var. *monogyna*

Globally

Stratum	Species
Herbaceous	*Spartina patens* var. *monogyna, Scirpus pungens*

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES:

Fire Island National Seashore

Spartina patens var. *monogyna*

Globally

Spartina patens var. *monogyna*

VEGETATION DESCRIPTION:

Fire Island National Seashore

This upland maritime dune grassland community is dominated by *Spartina patens* var. *monogyna*, which forms nearly continuous cover. *Festuca rubra, Panicum virgatum,* and *Solidago sempervirens* occur sporadically and with low cover. The shrub layer is infrequent with *Baccharis halimifolia* and *Myrica pensylvanica* occurring in small clusters. Unvegetated surface is minimal and composed of bare sand.

Globally

This community is characterized by upland maritime dune grassland vegetation. *Spartina patens*, and sometimes *Schoenoplectus pungens* (= *Scirpus pungens*), or both are dominant on dunes or overwash terraces. Total vegetation cover is variable, ranging from quite sparse (25% cover) to dense. Bare sand is often visible through the vegetation, and there is no soil profile development. Species diversity is variable; although it may be quite low and confined to the nominate species in the northern part of the range, it may be of greater diversity, including *Strophostyles helvula, Solidago sempervirens, Cenchrus tribuloides, Setaria parviflora, Distichlis spicata, Sabatia stellaris, Ammophila breviligulata, Suaeda linearis, Bassia hirsuta, Atriplex patula, Fimbristylis castanea*, and *Cakile edentula* ssp. *edentula*.

Synonymy: Wash (Hill 1986), Wash (Higgins et al. 1971), Dunegrass community, in part (Higgins et al. 1971), Grassland community (Baumann 1978), Low dune community (Boule 1979), Dry community of barrier flats (Travis and Godfrey 1976), Secondary dunes (Klotz 1986), Overwash community (Klotz 1986)

COMMENTS:

Fire Island National Seashore

Globally

This community differs ecologically from dune grasslands dominated by *Ammophila breviligulata* or *Uniola paniculata*, which are primarily impacted by wind-deposited sand. This community is impacted by wave-deposited sand.

States/Provinces:	DE:S?, MD:S?, NC:S?, NJ:S?, NY:S?, VA:S?
OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES:	
CONSERVATION RANK:	G2G3 (98-11-04)
DATABASE CODE:	CEGL004097
MAP UNITS:	

REFERENCES:

Baumann 1978
Boule 1979
Hill 1986
Higgins et al. 1971
Klotz 1986
Travis and Godfrey 1976